

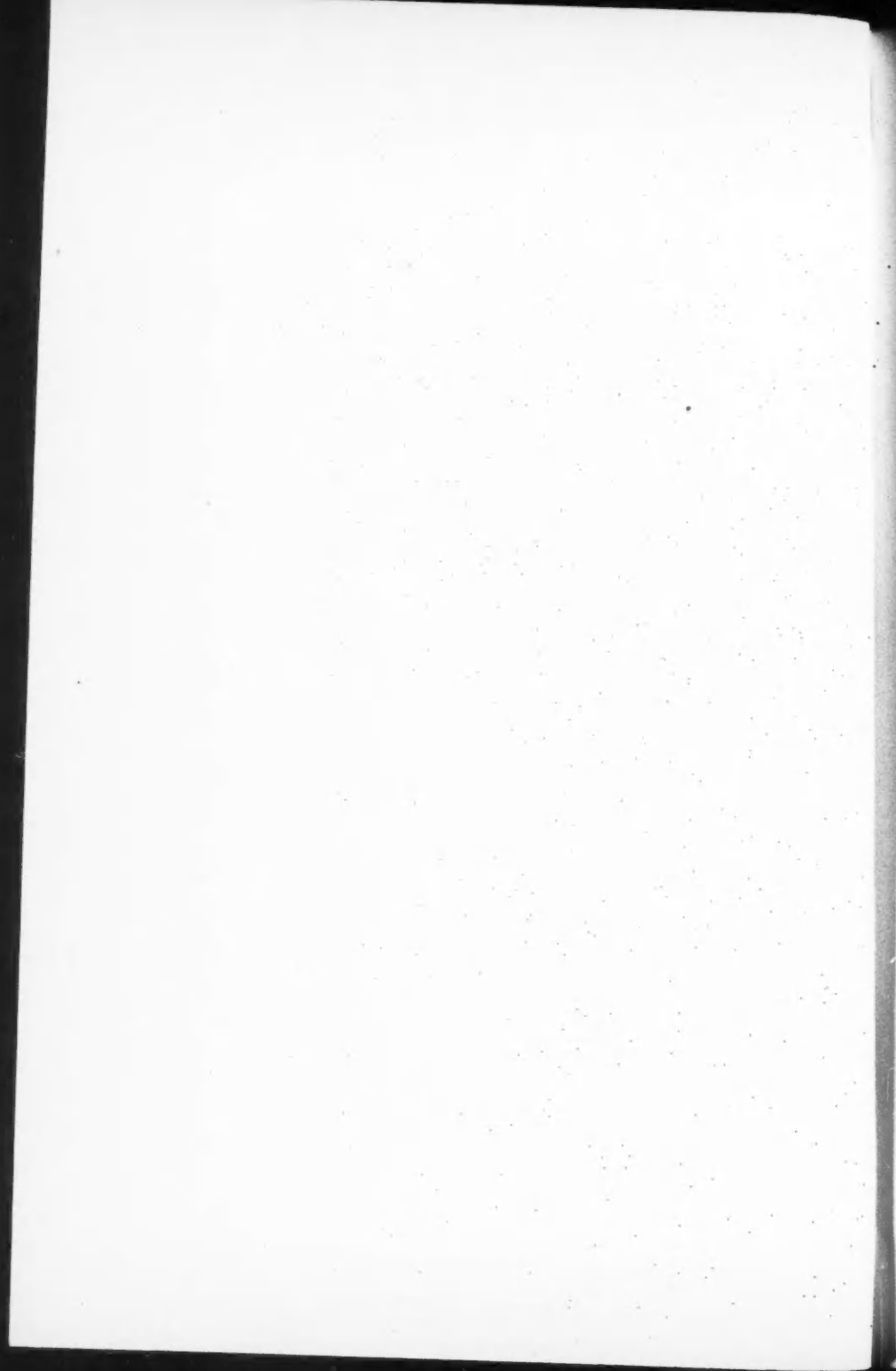
# **R**ESIDENTIAL DESEGREGATION

by

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## RESIDENTIAL DESEGREGATION

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**A**NTI-BIAS MEASURES now being pressed upon law-makers by minority groups in many states and large cities give evidence that the struggle against racial discrimination has entered a new phase. Laws restricting or forbidding racial discrimination in the rental or sale of apartments or of houses in new real estate developments were enacted by the legislatures of five states in 1957. At the end of the year New York City took the longest step yet attempted by an American municipality to further racial equality in private housing.

The large cities of the North, where Negro populations are overflowing the boundaries of segregated neighborhoods, are the centers of agitation for equal treatment of the races in sale or rental of housing accommodations. Pressure for removal of barriers to occupancy of homes in white districts by Negro families has been building up since the Supreme Court rendered its decision in 1954 requiring eventual integration of public school systems.

Large parts of the South are trying to ward off school desegregation by resort to a wide variety of legal devices;<sup>1</sup> in the North partial racial segregation hangs on in many schools as a result of persisting residential segregation, which is reflected in school enrollments.<sup>2</sup>

Housing segregation lies behind much of such race tension as exists in the North. Entrance of a Negro family into a white neighborhood has touched off disturbances ranging from panic selling by white families to assault and riot. Admission of a Negro family to Trumbull Park, a Chicago housing project, in 1953 started several years of

<sup>1</sup> See "Legal Processes in Race Relations," *ERR*, 1957 Vol. II, pp. 766-778.

<sup>2</sup> A survey by the American Jewish Committee showed that 23 per cent of the public schools of eight northern cities had non-white pupil majorities in the period 1954-1957. Nine of every ten Negro elementary pupils in Chicago attended predominantly Negro schools. Detroit had 88 and Los Angeles 70 schools in which at least four-fifths of the pupils were non-white; New York had 44 schools with 90 per cent non-white attendance.

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race conflict which necessitated extensive and costly police patrolling and led to numerous arrests. When a Negro family moved to Levittown, Pa., last August, it was tormented so relentlessly that a 24-hour state police guard had to be put on duty.

At the same time, municipal officials attribute many of the social ills of large cities, including teen-age hoodlumism, to congestion in non-white slum sections. Residential segregation, together with poor housing conditions, is said to foment gang warfare between young people of different races. The sheriff of Cook County, Ill., has pointed to residential segregation as one of the root causes of race troubles in Chicago.<sup>3</sup> The mayor of Philadelphia, Richardson Dilworth, told a television audience on Oct. 20 that white metropolitan populations help to perpetuate slum evils by resisting dispersal of Negro families. In addition, movement of white families to the suburbs makes it all the harder for cities to collect the revenues needed to finance slum clearance projects.

#### RESORT TO LEGISLATIVE ACTION TO END HOUSING BIAS

Growth of the Negro population in big northern cities has given the minority race added influence in pressing for removal of discriminatory barriers in housing. The main objective of this struggle is enactment of effective state and local anti-bias legislation. Court action against restrictive practices as infringing constitutional rights—the route taken to knock down statutory provisions for segregation in public schools—has not proved helpful as a means of putting an end to segregation in private housing.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1948 that racial covenants in real estate contracts could not be enforced by legal process. But the same opinion stated that "These restrictive agreements standing alone cannot be regarded as a violation of any rights guaranteed to a petitioner by the 14th Amendment" so long as adherence to the covenants is voluntary.<sup>4</sup> The Court refused two years later to review a state court decision which sustained the right of the proprietors of Stuyvesant Town in New York City to bar Negro tenants even though government assistance had figured in construction of that housing development. The

<sup>3</sup> "Interview With Joseph D. Lohman," *U.S. News & World Report*, Nov. 29, 1957, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948).

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state court held that no "constitutional inhibitions" on a private agency derived from the fact that the government had participated in its development of an economic facility.

Since these decisions were handed down, the drive for statutory bans on racial discrimination in housing has been stepped up. The trend is toward gradual extension of the coverage of anti-bias legislation from public to quasi-public housing and, finally, to private housing.

### NEW YORK CITY'S ATTACK ON BIAS IN PRIVATE HOUSING

New York City Mayor Robert F. Wagner on Dec. 30 put his signature to the first law ever enacted in any jurisdiction to place a virtually all-embracing prohibition on racial discrimination or segregation in sale or rental of living quarters. Other laws and ordinances of this sort have applied only to property developed with some kind of government assistance. The New York City law includes in its coverage privately owned property in the construction or sale of which none but exclusively private financing is involved.

The New York law, which will go into effect Apr. 1, applies to (1) any private multiple dwelling which houses three or more families, and (2) single or double dwellings located in developments of ten or more housing units. The law places the following restrictions on sale or rental of such properties:

No owner, lessee, sublessee, assignee, or managing agent of, or other person having the right to sell, rent, or lease a housing accommodation . . . shall refuse to sell, rent, lease or otherwise deny to or withhold from any person or group of persons such housing accommodations because of the race, color, religion, national origin, or ancestry of such person or persons, or discriminate against or segregate any person because of his race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry in the terms, conditions or privileges of the sale, rental or lease . . . or in the furnishing of [connected] facilities or services.

This statute provides for a totally new application of governmental police power. Justification for use of the police power to bar bias in housing is found in the law's assertion that "Discrimination and segregation in housing . . . have caused increased mortality, morbidity, delinquency, risk of fire, intergroup tension, loss of tax revenue and other evils." "As a result," the law states, "the peace, health, safety and general welfare of the entire city and

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all its inhabitants are threatened." The act further justifies exercise of the police power in this case as necessary to assure desegregation of public schools:

Segregation in housing . . . necessarily results in . . . racial segregation in public schools and other facilities, which is condemned by the constitutions of our state and nation. In order to guard against these evils, it is necessary to assure to all inhabitants of the city equal opportunity to obtain living quarters, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry.

Passage of the measure climaxed six months of heated debate. The bill was a major issue in the mayoralty campaign last autumn. Re-election of Mayor Wagner was taken as a mandate from the voters for its passage. The bill had originally contained penalty clauses, which could have brought a suspected violator immediately into court liable to \$500 fine on a misdemeanor conviction. In final form, however, the bill substituted a conciliation procedure.

The law allows any aggrieved person to file a complaint with the Commission on Intergroup Relations,<sup>6</sup> which will attempt to settle the matter. If the commission is unable to eliminate a practice which it deems in violation of the law, the case will be referred to a new agency, the Fair Housing Practices Panel, consisting of 12 members to be appointed by the mayor. Any three members of the panel may sit as a board with power to subpoena witnesses; take testimony, and decide whether to recommend that the city's legal officers seek a court judgment.

Supporters of the New York City law hailed its passage as historic and predicted that it would become a model for similar enactments in other communities. Gov. Averell Harriman told the legislature, in his annual message on Jan. 8, that the principle embodied in the local law "should be made applicable on a state-wide basis." However, spokesmen for the Real Estate Board of New York, which led the fight on the measure, vowed to challenge its constitutionality, if necessary all the way to the Supreme Court, on the ground that the act "violates the fundamental rights of the ownership of private property."

#### STATE AND LOCAL LAWS ON PUBLICLY AIDED HOUSING

Five states put major legislation on the statute books in 1957 to outlaw discriminatory practices in the provision of

<sup>6</sup> Established by city ordinance in 1955 to receive complaints and investigate discriminatory practices by public and private agencies.

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housing. Four of the states—Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, Washington—enacted measures similar to a law passed in New York State in 1955 which forbids discrimination in sale or rental of housing financed with government assistance. A ban on discrimination was thus extended to new and renovated housing covered by Federal Housing Administration or Veterans Administration mortgage guarantees or loan insurance.

The fifth state, Minnesota, adopted legislation last year which pronounced it a "civil right" to acquire or occupy housing without regard to race or creed; denial of this right was declared "against public policy." The act also created a commission to investigate discrimination and segregation in housing.

Eight other state legislatures considered proposed laws of the New York State type during the 1957 sessions. Such a bill was approved by one house of the New Mexico legislature but failed of passage by a narrow margin in the other house. Although the measures were bottled up in committee in California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, the issue is expected to remain active in those states. Gov. G. Mennen Williams brought up the question, Jan. 9, in his first message to the current session of the Michigan legislature. He recommended conversion of the state's Fair Employment Practices Commission into a Civil Rights Commission which would be empowered, among other things, to eliminate discrimination in publicly financed or assisted housing projects.

A total of 13 northern and western states—Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Washington, Wisconsin—and the District of Columbia now have statutes of varying effectiveness which establish statewide policies in opposition to racial or religious discrimination in housing. In addition, at least 28 large cities in some 20 states have adopted anti-bias measures. California has no state law on housing bias, but five of its cities—Fresno, Los Angeles, Richmond, Sacramento, San Francisco—have extensive local legislation on the subject. Three Ohio cities—Cleveland, Cincinnati, Toledo—likewise have anti-bias ordinances although there is no state law.

Most of the effective legislation dates from initiation of the national slum clearance and urban redevelopment pro-

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gram authorized by the federal Housing Act of 1949. The typical state or local law prohibits discriminatory selling, leasing or renting of new or renovated housing developed with public assistance of various kinds. Some 300 localities operate public housing under state or local laws or policies making the units open to racially mixed occupancy.

Several state laws forbid restrictive covenants in connection with sale of dwellings built or renovated under urban renewal programs. Others, like Pennsylvania, require contracts between private redevelopers and the housing authority to carry an anti-discrimination covenant. The Connecticut Commission on Civil Rights has ruled that a real estate agent is subject to a state law against discrimination in places of public accommodation; therefore, he must not refuse to serve clients for reasons of race, color or creed.

Existing municipal measures range from a resolution of the Baltimore Public Housing Authority, calling for elimination of the race factor in tenant selection, to a requirement of the Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority that property developed with its aid carry an anti-discrimination covenant binding on future "successors, heirs, representatives, and assigns." Other large cities having formal anti-bias policies covering public housing and houses in redeveloped areas include Boston, Chester (Pa.), Chicago, Denver, Detroit, Hartford, Los Angeles, Omaha, Pontiac (Mich.), Newark, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Providence, Superior (Wis.) and Wilmington (Del.).

#### DEVELOPMENT OF MODEL ANTI-BIAS HOUSING CONTROLS

Review of the step-by-step growth of anti-bias legislation in areas with the most advanced controls indicates where and how pressure is likely to be exerted in other cities and states. New York in particular has often set the pattern for welfare legislation.

New York State's first public housing law, in 1939, included a clause which forbade "discrimination" in selection of tenants for low-cost, publicly subsidized housing units. But large housing developments carried out by private companies with cost-saving concessions from governments were not subject to the restriction. Agitation against the racially selective policies of such new housing



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projects led New York City to pass a law in 1944 to withhold from private developments practicing discrimination the tax exemption and other benefits available to certain housing projects in New York State.<sup>6</sup>

Five years later New York City enacted legislation requiring that every deed or lease executed by the city for housing construction carry an anti-discrimination covenant. A 1951 city law made racial discrimination in publicly assisted housing a misdemeanor. A 1954 law forbade discrimination in all family housing financed under government guarantees.

New York State legislation followed a few paces behind that of its biggest city. A 1950 act prohibited discrimination in certain types of publicly assisted housing and specifically defined segregation as a form of discrimination. Legislation in 1955 broadened the definition of "publicly assisted housing." Under state law the ban on race discrimination now applies to any housing property which is:

- (1) Granted state or local tax exemption.
- (2) Constructed on land sold below cost under the federal Housing Act of 1949.
- (3) Constructed on property acquired by the state through condemnation for purposes of urban redevelopment.
- (4) Granted state financial assistance for acquisition, construction, repair or maintenance.
- (5) Located in a multiple dwelling acquired, built, rehabilitated, repaired or maintained with the proceeds of a government-guaranteed loan (but only for the life of the loan).
- (6) Offered for sale by a person who controls ten or more housing accommodations on contiguous land, if the accommodation is financed in any way with a government-guaranteed loan.

New Jersey's interracial housing policy dates back to 1946 legislation for veterans' housing. Later measures banned discrimination in housing built with public assistance. Discrimination in granting mortgage loans for private housing was prohibited in 1955, and legislation approved last June declared it a civil right to obtain housing without regard to race or creed in any accommodation financed with government guarantees.

Massachusetts banned "discrimination or segregation" in

<sup>6</sup> The Limited Dividend Housing Company Law of 1926, under which Knickerbocker Village was constructed in New York City, was the first state law to grant tax exemption and other benefits in connection with limited-profit housing developments. Laws enacted in 1941 and 1944 gave further encouragement to urban redevelopment by private companies.

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public housing in 1950. The ban was extended in 1957 to the same categories as those covered by the New York law. Oregon's 1957 statute banned racial discrimination in multiple dwellings of five or more housing units; and forbade "any distinction, discrimination or restriction . . . in the price, terms, conditions or privileges" of the sale or lease and any attempt to discourage sale or rental to minorities. Advertising of "preference, limitation, specification, or discrimination based on race, color, religion or national origin" also was prohibited.

Washington State's new law made it an "unfair practice" for the owner of a "publicly assisted" dwelling to refuse sale or rental or to discriminate in the terms of the transaction because of race or color. Banks and mortgage companies were forbidden to inquire into the racial, religious or national origins of applicants for mortgage loans for properties developed within publicly assisted projects.

#### FEDERAL POLICIES ON RACIAL INTEGRATION IN HOUSING

No federal law specifically bars segregation or discrimination in housing projects not directly administered by an agency of the U.S. government. Federal housing agencies have always bowed to local policies and racial patterns. From the start the Federal Housing Administration, created by act of Congress in 1934, considered it necessary to support segregationist practices in order to protect the guarantees it extended to builders and buyers. Pro-integrationists for years assailed F.H.A. for stressing in its underwriting manual a need to preserve "neighborhood stability" by maintaining homogeneity of race and class; the agency was criticized also because its lists of "adverse influences" on real estate investment included "infiltration of inharmonious racial or nationality groups."

Under pressure from offended minorities, the language of the manual, if not the policy of the agency, was later modified. However, it was not until Feb. 15, 1950, long after the Supreme Court had ruled that racial covenants were unenforceable, that F.H.A. initiated a policy of withholding mortgage insurance on any property subject to such covenants. Since 1955 the agency has extended assistance to demonstration projects in "open occupancy" housing. F.H.A. procedure was revised last February to give further support to state and local anti-bias laws. Builders were warned that non-compliance with such laws

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might impair their ability to qualify for F.H.A. mortgage insurance.

The F.H.A.'s Voluntary Home Mortgage Credit Program, established in 1954 to loosen up mortgage money for minority groups, has helped Negroes to find homes outside segregated slums.<sup>7</sup> The Public Housing Administration in recent years has encouraged local authorities to adopt open occupancy policies in subsidized housing. It is slum clearance policy to give preference in rehousing of displaced families to members of minority races.

Federal housing agencies are still criticized on occasion for not limiting the various benefits to open occupancy housing regardless of state or local law. Housing Administrator Albert M. Cole has said in reply that wherever such a rule could be enforced it would result in "a sharper cutback in the rate of housing production and of our capacity to meet the housing needs of all the people." The federal government's role, he stated, was to encourage, assist and "sometimes to prod, but never to coerce."<sup>8</sup>

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## **Racial Trends in City Living Patterns**

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THE NEW LAWS and policies on bias in housing can scarcely be said to have brought a revolution in racial distribution of big city populations. They have come into the picture, however, at a time when significant breaks in traditional patterns have occurred, and they give considerable encouragement to the growing number of Negroes who attempt to cross residential barriers.

An appreciable amount of interracial housing has come into existence in the United States, but it is found chiefly in transition neighborhoods on the way to becoming all-Negro or all-white. It is found also in a number of communities where the Negro population never has been large and where the ghetto pattern therefore never was established. The few new private interracial real estate developments are rare enough to be considered novel, if not

<sup>7</sup> As of May 1957, 4,600 V.H.M.C. loans totaling \$42 million had been placed.

<sup>8</sup> Letter to Sen. Prescott S. Bush (R-Conn.), *Congressional Record*, June 21, 1956.

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experimental, but mixed occupancy has become an accepted thing in many public housing projects.

#### GROWTH OF NEGRO POPULATION OF NORTHERN CITIES

A fact of overriding importance in the push toward residential integration is the great growth of Negro populations in the big cities of the North. Anti-bias laws themselves are indicative of the growing numerical and political strength of big city Negroes. Significantly, their numbers swelled during a period when virtually no new city or suburban housing was built for Negro occupancy.

The non-white population of the United States increased 15 per cent in the decade 1940-1950,<sup>9</sup> but the number of dwelling units occupied by non-whites increased only 10 per cent. In the same period the white population increased 14 per cent and there was a 23 per cent increase in dwelling units for white occupancy.<sup>10</sup> The congestion in segregated neighborhoods resulting from Negro population expansion explains the spillover into white sections. Sheer need for places to live, far more than Negro aspirations for equality of treatment, has been the major impetus behind interracial housing.

Until World War I, there was no substantial northward drift of Negroes. Those who did migrate from the South were usually received without prejudice; they took jobs as unskilled workers or domestic servants and found homes near their places of employment. In the early years of the present century, the typical residential pattern of large northern cities included small, widely scattered Negro settlements.<sup>11</sup>

The great northward migrations of Negroes began during World War I and grew larger in the 1920s, when industrial expansion and curtailment of immigration created demands for Negro labor. Between 1910 and 1940, as many as 1¾ million Negroes moved up from the South.

So many Negroes came in so few years that they taxed the absorptive capacities of the cities. Their dark skins made them conspicuous and discouraged assimilation. They were unequipped

<sup>9</sup> The number of Negroes in the United States increased from 12,454,000 in 1940 to 15,482,000 in 1950, while the proportion of the non-white population living in the South declined from 74 to 67 per cent.

<sup>10</sup> Housing and Home Finance Agency, *Housing of the Nonwhite Population, 1940 to 1950* (July 1952), p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> When only two per cent of Chicago's population was Negro, in 1910, no neighborhood was more than three-fifths Negro and two-thirds of the city's Negroes lived in sections where they were in the minority.—Robert C. Weaver, *The Negro Ghetto* (1948), p. 18.

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for their new frontier, for the South had given them little or no education. . . . Their low pay denied most of them the homes and amenities which might have won social acceptance by their neighbors.<sup>12</sup>

Deliberate efforts in the North to confine Negroes to the poorer sections of cities began during this period.

World War II brought new and larger influxes of southern Negroes, who could find homes only in the crowded "black belts." The non-white population more than doubled between 1940 and 1950 in Denver, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Portland (Ore.), and San Francisco, while Alameda, Calif., had a fivefold increase. By 1950, when Negroes made up 10 per cent of the nation's total population, they comprised 35 per cent of the population in Washington, D.C., nearly 20 per cent in Philadelphia and the Borough of Manhattan, 16 per cent in Cleveland and Detroit.

Continued migration at a somewhat slower rate, the relatively high Negro birth rate, and the great movement of white families to the suburbs have continued in the 1950s to narrow the proportional gap between whites and non-whites in the big cities. Negroes today make up 44 per cent of the population of the nation's capital. Philadelphia's two million citizens now include 600,000 Negroes. The proportion of non-whites in Los Angeles has risen since 1950 from 11 to 14 per cent, in Chicago from 15 to 19 per cent, in New York City from 9 to 14 per cent. A University of Chicago study made a typical comment on these changes when it said: "The rapidly increasing non-white population of Chicago without question is generating the most acute problems which the city is experiencing today in respect to land use and human relations."<sup>13</sup>

### OVERFLOW FROM SEGREGATED TO TRANSITION AREAS

Increasing congestion in all-Negro sections leads inevitably to an overflowing of Negroes into bordering streets, and these experience an interracial phase until completely taken over by the non-white population. It is difficult to ascertain how many transition neighborhoods there are, how many persons live in them, or how long they will remain interracial. University of Chicago studies showed

<sup>12</sup> Charles Abrams, *Forbidden Neighbors* (1955), p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Chicago Community Inventory, University of Chicago, *Chicago's Negro Population* (June 1956), p. 1.

an increase in the number of "mixed tracts" in Chicago (with Negroes comprising from 1 to 97.4 per cent of the population) from 135 in 1940 to 204 in 1950. Although the increase appeared to indicate a trend toward interracial housing, it was not so regarded. One of the reports cautioned that "A highly segregated population, expanding under pressure of sheer numbers, can appear 'less segregated' during the expansion phase without any permanent change in residential patterns."<sup>14</sup>

The Chicago data for the ten-year period showed not a single instance of a mixed population tract in which the progression from all-white to all-Negro was arrested; in some areas, however, the rate of change was relatively slow. "The 1940-50 experience is, at most, typical of periods of large increases in the Negro population of the whole city, and instances of relatively stable mixed neighborhoods might appear during a period of less rapid growth of Negro population."<sup>15</sup>

The first Negroes to break the residential color line are rarely newly arrived migrants; usually they are those of higher educational, social and economic attainments. Most of them are home-buyers rather than renters, but in either case they pay more than their white neighbors for the houses they occupy. The fact that they are obliged to do so, together with the continuing shortage of Negro housing, leads to doubling up of families and in some cases to congestion which may soon match that of recently vacated slums. An undetermined question is the extent to which adherence to the practice of segregation contributes to the neighborhood deterioration that causes many white householders to fear the invasion of Negro families.

#### COMMUNITY-WIDE DISPERSAL OF MINORITY FAMILIES

Interracial neighborhoods are not necessarily transition neighborhoods. Some Negro and white families have lived side by side for years without provoking any particular stir.

Connecticut authorities have estimated that 600 Negro families, or 4 per cent of the state's total Negro population of 16,000, live in non-segregated private residential neighborhoods which are fairly stable in composition. A sampling

<sup>14</sup> Otis Dudley Duncan and Beverly Duncan, *The Negro Population of Chicago* (1957), p. 99.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

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of several hundred families showed that about one-half of the people in each racial group had been living in their present homes for more than eight years. One-third of the Negro families had been at the same address for 15 or more years and one-third of their white neighbors had been living next door for the same length of time. One-half of the white families had moved into their homes after the Negroes had become residents of the neighborhoods.

The Negro population in no instance was large. Only 10 per cent of the neighborhoods had six or more Negro families and 30 per cent had only one. This density was said to approximate "the type of non-segregated neighborhood that could be expected to prevail in Connecticut if all Negro families had freedom of opportunity to rent or purchase housing anywhere without racial restrictions."<sup>16</sup>

The Negro population of the District of Columbia has spread into many sections, including some in which an interracial pattern has jelled. A number of studies indicate that racial transition in the capital city, where 11,360 dwelling units were transferred from white to non-white occupancy between 1940 and 1950, has not been "universally a matter of progressive and wholesale out-migration of whites accompanied by a similar in-migration of non-whites."<sup>17</sup> The percentage of city blocks that were entirely Negro changed very little in the 1940-1950 decade, while the percentage that were all-white dropped from 53.5 to 42.6 per cent. However, the 1960 census may be expected to show an increase in the ratio of all-Negro blocks. Rapid growth of Washington's colored population since 1950 has been accompanied by shifts from white to Negro occupancy over extensive areas of the city and by continued white migration to Maryland and Virginia suburbs.

### **RACIAL INTEGRATION IN PUBLICLY ASSISTED PROJECTS**

Few private real estate developments are initially interracial; Negroes usually buy from individual owners rather than from original developers. However, F.H.A. recently reported that it had extended mortgage assistance to some 40 projects which have helped in "solving the difficult problems associated with the establishment of a free housing market." One of the projects is Concord Park Homes, in

<sup>16</sup> Connecticut Commission on Civil Rights, *Private Interracial Neighborhoods in Connecticut* (1957), pp. 6-7.

<sup>17</sup> George B. Nesbitt, "Dispersion of Nonwhite Residence in Washington, D. C.," *Land Economics*, August 1956, p. 202.



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the Philadelphia-Trenton area, which contains 140 houses priced at \$11,900. This project's success led its sponsors to develop another interracial project, Greenbelt Knolls, featuring houses priced up to \$22,000. F.H.A. last year approved assistance for the first racially integrated housing project in Kansas City, Mo., planned to provide 230 dwellings in the \$12,000-\$17,000 range.

A number of interracial housing developments are going up as part of slum clearance and urban rehabilitation programs. Latest figures on federally approved urban renewal projects for residential purposes indicated that 90 per cent of the planned units would be made available without regard to race of the occupants. New "open occupancy" housing developments connected with urban renewal include Penn Towne Apartments in Philadelphia, Lake Meadows in Chicago, Morningside Gardens in New York, and one in the southern state of Arkansas—at Little Rock. The latest directory of low-rent public housing programs, Mar. 31, 1957, showed that 292 localities with 694 projects had open occupancy policies, and that 385 of the projects were in fact completely integrated (more than one non-white family among white occupants).

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### **Attitudes Toward Residential Integration**

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EFFORTS to promote residential integration run into a hard core of race prejudice in the North no less than in the South. White northerners who accept Negroes in every other area of social contact may still draw the line at accepting them as neighbors. This prejudice appears to derive in large part from fear that colored occupancy will cause swift deterioration in the character of a neighborhood. The fear is not only that a substantial investment will drop in value; it also touches deep emotions attached to the basic satisfactions of home ownership. An author who favors residential integration has commented on the strength of such fears:

The aspect of social deterioration most frightening of all is the threatened infiltration into the neighborhood of the wrong kind of neighbors. . . . [This fear] functions whether the house is costly or cheap, well-preserved or shabby. . . . It is no longer the type of house but the type of neighborhood which reflects social stand-



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ing. . . . [In the suburbs] social deterioration now affects value even more than physical deterioration does.<sup>18</sup>

Antipathy to members of minority races as neighbors has led to use of numerous devices for their exclusion. Real estate codes, zoning practices, covenants in leases have served to stem the push of Negro populations into white neighborhoods. Many of the so-called "neighborhood improvement associations," as well as other civic organizations, have brought pressure on local authorities and on residents of all-white neighborhoods to "resist the invader." These groups often have acted to prevent preparation of new sites for Negro housing. Objections of white families to construction of Negro communities nearby is one reason why relatively few all-Negro suburbs have come into the picture in recent years.

The attitude of the white community toward Negro settlement has been an important stumbling block to public housing and slum clearance. A builders' trade publication recently reviewed the situation in three cities—Chicago, Columbus, Philadelphia—which have found it difficult to find sites for public housing. In each instance the root reason was discovered to be the racial integration policy. The Columbus Housing Authority director was quoted as saying: "There's no question about it—our whole problem in getting a project going today is the integration, open-occupancy issue." The publication commented: "Most U.S. white citizens are so unready to accept Negroes as neighbors that they are exercising their sovereignty to prevent it, if possible. The fact that Negro exclusion is clothed in hypocritical evasions labeled zoning, land use or real estate values, does not alter the central fact that it is the real motivating force."<sup>19</sup>

### EFFECT OF NEGRO OCCUPANCY ON REAL ESTATE VALUES

Changes that may take place after a Negro family moves into a white neighborhood follow no fixed pattern. Much depends on the character of the neighborhood and on whether or not it was already in a stage of decline. Availability of houses and sites for Negro occupancy elsewhere in the community may determine whether a mixed neighborhood will be quickly transformed into a "black ghetto."

<sup>18</sup> Charles Abrams, *Forbidden Neighbors* (1955), pp. 139-140.

<sup>19</sup> *House and Home*, July 1957, pp. 40-41.

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Behavior of the white families—whether they keep their heads or yield to panic-selling pressures—influences both the market value of the properties and changes in the character of the neighborhood.

*Business Week*, reviewing the question of real estate values, found that "By buying into a white neighborhood, a Negro may depress, stabilize or raise values—temporarily or over the long term."<sup>20</sup> A leading appraiser in Birmingham, where the segregation pattern is typical of that in large industrial cities in all parts of the country, has observed that Negro occupancy in formerly all-white fringe areas tends to improve the quality of the transition neighborhood but may deflate values in adjacent neighborhoods. In that case, however, the new area of Negro occupancy does not remain long in transition; it is simply upgraded by repair and refurbishment from a poor white to a quality Negro neighborhood. But "properties for as much as a mile on all sides, if residential areas, will feel repercussions as evidenced by diminishing sales or falling prices."<sup>21</sup>

Until recently, virtually all new suburban developments have been for white occupancy only. The developers have contended that racial exclusion is necessary to assure successful marketing of the properties. Builders of the Levittowns, biggest housing developments in the country, have adhered to a no-Negroes policy as a matter of business. William J. Levitt, president of the company, recently explained why this policy would be followed at the new Levittown to be built in Prince Georges County, Md.:

I have come to know that if we sell one house to a Negro family, then 90 to 95 of our white customers will not buy into the community. That is their attitude, not ours. We did not create it and we cannot cure it. Custom and precedent will dictate to us what we do in Maryland.<sup>22</sup>

Levitt admitted, however, that values had not fallen in Levittown, Pa., since a Negro family moved in there.

#### LONG-RUN FACTORS AFFECTING RESIDENTIAL INTEGRATION

Evidence could be cited on both sides of the thesis that white acceptance of Negro neighbors is growing and that antipathy to interracial housing is weakening. It seems

<sup>20</sup> *Business Week*, Aug. 31, 1957, pp. 32-33.

<sup>21</sup> John W. Saucier, "Reactions of Negro Buyers," *The Residential Appraiser*, May 1957, pp. 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> William J. Levitt. Interview in *Washington Star*, Dec. 8, 1957.

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clear that residential prejudice, if it is declining, is declining slowly. Acceptance of residential integration is more likely to occur in central city developments than in suburbs where neighbors tend to mix socially to a greater extent.

Experience indicates that many white home owners will accept a few Negro families, but that there is a point of density in Negro occupation of a neighborhood which will inevitably lead to total clearance of white residents. This is the so-called "tip point" which marks the change from a mixed to an all-black neighborhood.

The 'tip point' varies from city to city and from neighborhood to neighborhood. But for the vast majority of white Americans a tip point exists. Once it is exceeded, they will no longer stay among Negro neighbors. . . . Real estate operators, seeking the higher revenues that come with Negro overcrowding, talk freely among themselves about "tipping a building" or "tipping a neighborhood."<sup>23</sup>

Houses in Concord Park, Bucks County, Pa., one of the few privately sponsored open occupancy developments, were sold on the basis of 55 per cent white and 45 per cent Negro occupancy. An official of the development company told a National Urban League meeting that "We have discovered that controlled occupancy . . . is absolutely essential, otherwise the pressure of the tremendous unmet Negro market forces the development into a ghetto pattern."<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, another private interracial housing development—Sunnyhills, near San Francisco—had no race quota and has turned out to be 90 per cent white.<sup>25</sup>

Promoters of interracial housing look to a long period of public education to allay fears of Negro infiltration. Assistance along that line will come, they believe, from demonstration by actual experience in integrated developments that decay does not necessarily follow interracial occupancy. The chairman of the Housing Advisory Council to the New York State Commission Against Discrimination has commented that "The examples during the past decade of successfully integrated housing demonstrate that . . . we tend to underestimate our ability to live with one another."<sup>26</sup> Levittown on Long Island and Stuyvesant Town

<sup>23</sup> Morton Grodzins, "Metropolitan Segregation," *Scientific American*, October 1957.

<sup>24</sup> Morris Milgrim, speech in Milwaukee, Sept. 8, 1955.

<sup>25</sup> This is a project of 169 houses on 47 acres, developed with United Automobile Workers support, to provide homes for workers in new auto plants.

<sup>26</sup> James H. Scheuer, testimony before New York City Council, General Welfare Committee, June 7, 1957.

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in New York City were cited as examples of originally all-white developments into which a number of Negro families have moved without harm to either the social character or the economic value of the properties.

A University of Pennsylvania study of the interracial Concord Park development found relatively few of the white buyers concerned one way or another about its racial composition. Nearly one-half of them did not even know it was interracial when they went to look at the houses. The vast majority said they decided to buy for the usual reasons pertaining to good housing; only 11 per cent said they were strongly influenced by its interracial policy.<sup>27</sup>

Religious groups sometimes work to allay fears of Negro infiltration. The Presbyterian Church has proposed that its members with houses for sale make them available to any qualified purchaser without regard to race, and the Congregational Christian Church has urged its members to support "non-segregated practices in selling, buying and leasing property."<sup>28</sup> The American Society of Friends is a large investor in the interracial Concord Park Homes.

Commercial interest in the Negro housing market has grown with improvement of the Negro's economic status. The Mortgage Bankers Association of America took recognition of the Negro housing potential by undertaking a study of financing of minority housing. It found that where Negro housing is well located, attractively designed, and properly priced, and where occupants are screened for character and credit, "the projects have without exception been successful." It urged that "mortgage lenders give greater concern to local questions affecting the availability of sites for Negro families, since this problem is undoubtedly the key obstacle . . . to a more rapid expansion of . . . demand . . . and to greater assurance of success in the developments that are undertaken." Enlargement of the existing housing supply for Negro occupants would do much to relieve pressures which have associated Negro occupancy with slums and blight. A probable attendant result would be to give greater stability to racially mixed neighborhoods.

<sup>27</sup> More than one-half of the white buyers were Protestants and not members of any national or religious minority; 44 per cent had American-born parents on both sides; only one-sixth had two foreign-born parents; 16 per cent were Jews.—University of Pennsylvania, Institute for Urban Studies, *Buyers of Interracial Housing* (January 1957), p. 46.

<sup>28</sup> Marian Perry Yankauer, "Homes for Sale," *Christian Century*, Nov. 28, 1956.

